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“B & M”

*What two young
Maine men founded
80 years ago!*

CHARLES S. MORRILL





“Were American Newcomen to do naught else, our work is well done if we succeed in sharing with America a strengthened inspiration to continue the struggle towards a nobler Civilization—through wider knowledge and understanding of the hopes, ambitions, and deeds of leaders in the past who have upheld Civilization’s material progress. As we look backward, let us look forward.”

—CHARLES PENROSE
Senior Vice-President for North America
The Newcomen Society of England



This statement, crystallizing a broad purpose of the Society, was first read at the Newcomen Meeting at New York World’s Fair on August 5, 1939, when American Newcomen were guests of The British Government

“Actorum Memores simul affectamus Agenda”

“B & M”—What two young Maine men founded 80 years ago! George Burnham (1831-1909) and Charles S. Morrill (1836-1901)—Pioneers in Maine

An Address at Portland



AMERICAN NEWCOMEN, through the years, has honored numerous industries both in the United States of America and in Canada, of whatever nature; and has honored the memories of pioneer founders whose vision, courage, initiative, determination, ceaseless effort, hard work, and abiding Faith have established industrial enterprises that have endured through generations. These men have contributed to the economic and material advance of America. Such a Newcomen manuscript is this, dealing with the lives and work and times of two Maine men, whose names and reputation were destined to reach far, not only in their native New England but throughout America. The story of their lives well may bring inspiration to the America of today!



"This indeed is Maine!"

“B & M”
*What two young
Maine men founded
80 years ago!*

CHARLES S. MORRILL

MEMBER OF THE NEWCOMEN SOCIETY
PRESIDENT
BURNHAM & MORRILL COMPANY
PORTLAND
MAINE



THE NEWCOMEN SOCIETY IN NORTH AMERICA
NEW YORK SAN FRANCISCO MONTREAL

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*This Newcomen Address, dealing with the
colorful history of Burnham & Morrill Com-
pany and their contributions to the Food
Industry in America during 80 years, was
delivered on the occasion of a Maine New-
comen Luncheon of The Newcomen Society
of England, held in The Mayfair Room of
Hotel Lafayette, at Portland, Maine, U.S.A.,
when Mr. Morrill was the guest of
honor, on December 1, 1950*



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Whatever the season, whenever the year, in Winter's
snows or Summer's suns, true beauty of fields and shore
and ocean still abounds in this "Land of Salty Magic";
this glorious Maine! America is blessed by that
treasure spot of Northern New England!



Biographical Sketch of The Author

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New England's land of amazing beauty—Maine—where mystery lurks at late twilight when surf rolls in out of nowhere in the blanket fog, and every island lighthouse is lost to sight; Maine—where sandpipers run their appointed journeyings on a crescent beach wet by an ebbing tide, and rock ledges offshore are raising sunken heads; Maine—where sunlit glory bursts out, at early sunrise, below a darkened rim of ocean's broad horizon; Maine, land of amazing beauty, is the proud background of two honored Maine families, both of British ancestry, whose names, during now generations, have been household words in America. None better could tell the very human story of the Burnhams and the Morrills than does CHARLES S. MORRILL of Portland, well-known President of Burnham & Morrill Company. Native of Maine, grandson of the original founding Morrill (CHARLES S. MORRILL: 1836-1901), and a graduate of Yale University, in the Class of 1925s, Mr. Morrill has been identified with this business just 25 years. His is a heritage in the Food Industry that extends back over a period of a century, because the two founders, whose names are linked, worked together in that industry in Maine beginning in 1845, that is, 105 years ago. Burnham & Morrill Company are happy examples of leading Maine families whose service to New England and to America continues, through the years, true to their best traditions. America has been enriched thereby. Industrialist, business executive, student of industrial history in New England, leading citizen of Maine, Mr. Morrill is a Vice-Chairman of the Maine Committee, in The Newcomen Society of England.



ITS MARK



My fellow members of Newcomen:

AMERICA's traditions in industrial beginnings and in the founding of business enterprise, wherever in the United States of America, have followed much the same pattern. A man or a couple of men have had the thought or the idea or the incentive—some call it the vision—to *start* something! It may be a factory or a railroad or a college, or whatever. To endure, it *must* be constructive. Most have been.

Curiously enough, much, very much of American enterprise started about a century ago—and all, naturally on a modest scale. They grew because *Somebody* worked hard. There appears to be no royal road. They grew because what they *Made*, or what they *Did*—lived up to traditions; had ideals. They grew, too, because America had a *Need* for what their purpose was.

These enterprises, whether today companies or corporations or institutions, have contributed something to the American People—in economic and material advance. America has been the better for their continued existence, through the years.

In the foregoing brief introduction, 'Mr. Chairman, I have sought to introduce to you in general terms what *two young Maine men* founded 80 years ago. We, amongst ourselves, speak familiarly of ourselves as "B & M." I refer, with proper modesty, to "Burnham & Morrill."

In this Newcomen Address delivered here at Portland, where both men worked in harmony and vision to found a business widely known today, I shall endeavor to tell you something of their lives—one was my grandfather—and something of their ideals. Their ideals were born of effort. All Maine men boast such a background. That may be one reason why Maine has won the respect of the rest of America.



And so, without apology, I begin this informal and intimate recital.

The Burnham & Morrill Company, on Casco Bay at Portland, Maine, is, as you likely know, a Food Packing Company. Its business for eighty years has been to seal food into tin cans; and then to market these, widely.

Perhaps nothing is wider cast on the American scene—or perhaps the world scene, for that matter—than the tin can. It litters the desert trails of the world; it follows armies; it fills the lockers of ships, and it stocks the pantries of civilization. You well may meet with an empty tin can on the Pyramid of Cheops, or on the Great Wall of China, or upon an African desert. Yet its effective use spans hardly a century.



Hermetically-sealed cans came too late to vary Napoleon's diet on St. Helena. Nevertheless the can came out of Napoleon's campaigns. Ironically, Napoleon and food are closely linked; and we still cannot be sure whether he will finally be remembered by the world as a conquering soldier or a piece of pastry.

Napoleon's soldiers carried their food in small metal boxes called canisters. These were also used for small shot, as we see in the

combination "grape and canister." Perhaps it was Napoleon himself who contracted canister to can. He had a literary flair. It was he who first called camels "ships of the desert."



Napoleon's cans, however, were mere containers, and were not sealed. They were not sterilized. Pasteurization was still to come. It came to this Country apparently first by way of the State of Maine, or possibly Nova Scotia.

At least Maine is generally acknowledged as the first home of corn packing in this Country. About 1840, a man named Isaac Winslow began experimenting with canning corn, near Portland. It would be, he argued, a fine thing for that famous City by the Sea. Only a few generations before, when the grain corn failed to arrive, Portland had all but starved to death, as we see from old Parson Smith's *Diary*. The city then had little agriculture, and lived by lumbering.

By 1850, there was no likelihood of famine, but there was a tidy profit to be made in canned corn, and Isaac Winslow meant to be the first to make it.

We see from his life the reason for Winslow's lively interest in food, especially in canned food. A native of Maine, he was a seaman in his early days, a whaler; and whalers on their long voyages had a consuming need of vegetables. Lacking them, scurvy might break out on board, and scurvy blackened men's gums and made their teeth drop out. It was at first thought that scurvy was a disease brought on by the "sameness of the food," the monotonous diet; later it was found that a lack of the juices of fresh vegetables caused it. Scurvy-smitten men had only to run a piece of raw potato over their gums to save their teeth.

In his early whaling days, Isaac Winslow went to France—a brother of his had settled there—and there he learned much of the new French ways of dealing with food. Shortly thereafter he conceived the idea of preserving foods by hermetically sealing them in cans. No doubt he had walked the poop of his whaler a good many nights before this new idea could really take shape. But he was naturally inventive, and had a lot of time on his hands.

A ship, said old Sam Johnson, is only a jail with the added risk of getting drowned. But a lot of good ideas have come out of jails, and by the same token, many brilliant thoughts have come out of a ship's night watches—ideas that had nothing to do with the mere navigation of the ship. Seamen's thoughts drift back on the wake, and Isaac Winslow much preferred a vision of a green Maine corn-field to the Sea's eternal blue. He pondered how to seal up that sweet green corn, hold all its sweetness, capture its very essence, and include it in ship's stores, where it could make head against the dreaded scurvy.

It became an obsession with him; and, at some time before 1840, he swallowed the anchor; which is to say, for the benefit of those who know more of cornfields than whalers, he gave up the Sea. Once ashore, he planted a piece of corn for his experiments, and got his brother-in-law, Caleb Jones, to help him.

First, he tried to cook the whole ear of corn. It didn't work. He tried pushing the kernels off the cob with a kind of fork. This too failed, but Isaac Winslow had the stuff of a natural inventor in him. He knew there must be a thousand blind alleys, but somewhere the true path was waiting. With that power of makeshift which has meant so much to Maine, he persevered, and went back to knifing the kernels off the cob again.



It was not only the cutting that bothered him, it was the cooking. Should he cook the kernels, and then seal them in the can, or should he seal them fresh in the can, and then cook them? He tried both ways. He boiled a great number of lots of corn in small lots, treated them to varying degrees of heat, and varying amounts of time. He marked these lots, and watched them.

And the corn spoiled. Boil it little, boil it long, it spoiled; and Isaac Winslow saw the savings of his whaling voyages go up in the smoke and steam of his experiments. When, in 1843, he tried direct or dry steam, again the whole lot spoiled. The year following, he went back to the open boiler process, cooking the corn in a common house-boiler. . . . After nine years, he thought he had it, and applied for a patent. The patent was refused.

Corn canning actually began commercially in 1852 with Nathan Winslow, son of Isaac. One generation must stand on the shoulders of another; patience and tenacity must be inherited. Life is short, and art is long—the canner's art no less than others. Nathan Winslow inched along. He took in with him his nephew, John Winslow Jones. The business increased. By the time the patent was granted, in 1862, John Winslow Jones was in the business alone, and for many years continued to be the largest packer in the State. He packed corn himself, and bought corn packed by others. And to all the cans he stuck the yellow label: "Winslow's Patent Hermetically Sealed Green Corn."



Also during the 'forties and 'fifties there were other experiments in canning going on. About 1841, Treat, Noble & Company were packing lobsters and salmon at Eastport, Maine. Then there was W. K. Lewis & Bros. who started a factory on Custom House Wharf, in Portland, packing meats and fish. Rumery & Burnham appeared about this time packing meats, fish, clams, poultry, and lobsters. Also appeared Portland Packing Company with lobsters.



But to return to my specific story. Rumery and Burnham was dissolved in 1867.

But George Burnham wasn't through his packing days. Far from it. He began business on his own to pack corn, fish, meats, etc., and took in John E. Burnham and Charles Morrill with him. These young men had learned their trade with Rumery & Burnham. Of these elements, in the early 'seventies, was made up the firm of Burnham & Morrill, which carries on today.



A word as to background:

Charles S. Morrill was descended from sturdy pioneering stock, planted in America in 1632 in the person of Abraham Morrill, who came over in the ship *Lion*, and made a living as blacksmith,

planter, and millwright. Charles Morrill was a broad-gauge man, with interests that went beyond his business. He worked hard at the business, which plainly had a first priority with him. Self-trained, self-cultivated, he threw in all his young energies, and made himself one of the real original progenitors of the canning industry.

George Burnham, Senior, had been no less important to the industry.



Burnham & Morrill's fish packing went far to remove a criticism of the great Frenchman Talleyrand, who came to America in 1794 to survey its commercial possibilities for a group of French financiers. Talleyrand's craft had become proverbial, and it was by no means limited to statecraft. He had gifts as an international financier, and he reported to his principals that the District of Maine would never prosper so long as its people were merely lumbermen and fishermen.

As for the lumberman, Talleyrand said: "It is destroying that makes his living. He destroys everywhere, so any place is good for him. He has no interest in improvements. If in leaving, he does not forget his ax, he leaves no regrets for the place where he has lived.

"And the fisherman receives from his profession a soul almost as heedless of affections; his interest in life is at the edge of the society to which he belongs. The fisherman's knowledge is only a little cunning, and his action, which consists only in having an arm hang over the side of the boat, closely resembles idleness!"

And so Talleyrand concluded that only Agriculture produced patriots in the real sense of the word; fishing made floaters and drifters.



Now if Talleyrand could go to Sea today in a dragger in January he would surely revise his estimate of fishing as a lazy trade; but in his day there was a certain justice in his criticism. It was a fact that when Captain John Smith, in 1614, landed on the Island of

Monhegan, off the Maine coast, the mainland itself was only a formidable wilderness, with a hostile Indian crouching under every bush. It was the Sea, the Gulf of Maine, that was the source of profit. Smith set up his fish stages on Monhegan and slack-salted cod there (that was as close as he could reach towards the modern art of preservation); and then shipped them away to Spain, where they sold, he said, at "a Pretty Profit."



But, as Talleyrand later said, it was a profit made by shifting and exploring adventurers. His fishermen went where the fish were, and had no fixed abode. It was the coming of the canning industry that gave a sure local market to Maine's fishermen, and made a steady livelihood for them.



Burnham & Morrill saw that farmer and fisherman *alike* are engaged in the production of perishables, and that the canning of these perishables means stable employment and a solid type of citizenship for both the tillers of the soil and the fishers of the Sea.



There were, even in Talleyrand's time, one or two natural philosophers who said that fishing was a kind of agriculture. Talleyrand denied that; but time showed that he was wrong. With today's modern methods, and with the help of the experiments of the Fish and Wildlife Service, fishing has indeed become a kind of agriculture; small lobsters, for example, are dropped to the bottom to grow, just as seed ashore is dropped in the hill.



Burnham & Morrill play no favorites, but open assured markets to the products of both sea and land; its experimental laboratory and diet kitchen work for both.

The laboratory of course is a far more complicated thing than it was in the days of the first Charles Morrill. With corn, for ex-

ample, the details of cooking and handling have changed radically. Today's filling machine produces 150 cans per minute or more depending upon the product.



The market for canned fish is wide, but it has limits. There is a certain public resistance to fish. Why does the small boy have poked at him so often that hoary old adage: "Fish make brains"? It is on the theory that he wants his share of brains, but dislikes fish. Fish is cheaper food than meat, and he must be coaxed into eating it. The eating of fish therefore must be linked with the increased production of brains. If he eats fish, his algebra troubles will be solved—we hope.

Fish, then, with some is an acquired taste. Not so meat. In place of a percentage of public resistance, there is the widest public acceptance. Out-and-out vegetarians are few and far between. Burnham & Morrill therefore has gone extensively into canned meats; into canned meat stews, along with its Oven Baked Beans, Brown Bread, fish products, and specialties, which many of our coastwise vessels include in their stores.



This link with the Sea is of course of long standing. From the first beginnings of canning, the ships that took Maine lumber and shooks into the Caribbean brought back the molasses that went into Burnham & Morrill Company Pork and Beans; and so our Maine cannery has played its part in perpetuating the Maine blue water legend.



The firm meanwhile changed its top control. Once that had been practically all Burnham—George Burnham, who took in with him young John Burnham and young Charles Morrill. In 1910, it became all Morrill, when George B. Morrill bought out the Burnham interest. He had to borrow money to do this; and he did it on a "character" note. The bank had confidence in his technical knowledge, his business shrewdness, and his general durability, and it let him have the money.

It was a risk of course, but it was a reasonable risk. Nowadays risk is a risky word. Where is the bank, *Gentlemen*, that will lend a young man money on his simple promise to pay it back? Yet in those old calculated risks many of our modern enterprises got their start.

Burnham & Morrill was one of them, and it has had good expansion through the decades. The present East Deering plant in Portland employs steadily 500 people; and B & M's ten country plants, which are seasonal, pack string-beans, corn, squash, blueberries. They employ for that two-month period about 1500 hands, both men and women.



The markets for these products are some near at hand and some distant. Increasing public acceptance of fish in the Mid-West has widened that market. Our *largest* market is New England to Norfolk, Virginia; *second*, the West Coast; *third*, the Great Lakes region; *fourth*, Florida and New Orleans.



The product really gets around. Our beans have been eaten as far away as India, though we don't know how they got there. *Life's* correspondent, going from Paris to Istanbul on the Orient Express, photographed a sterno stove as furnishing heat to a can of B & M Beans. A Chief Engineer of the Northern Coast Guard Patrol, speaking to Portland Rotary, said he had found a can of B & M Beans in an igloo just under the Arctic Circle. This raised a laugh that puzzled him; he didn't know that B & M Beans were packed in Portland.



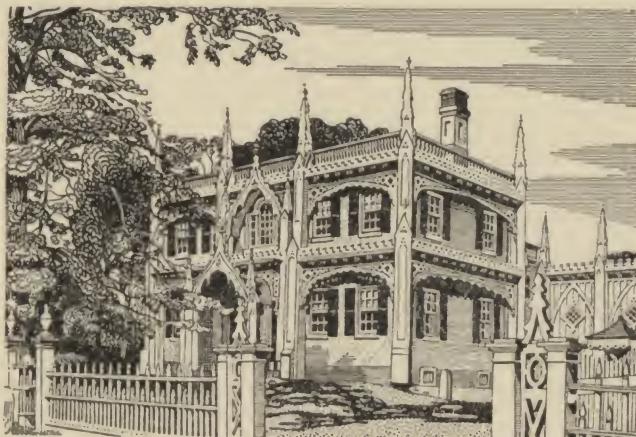
The Burnham & Morrill Company is 80 years old, and in that time has made good strides, and produced some striking innovations. We cannot say what the next 80 years have in store; but we look confidently for more discoveries in food packing, and more expansion generally. Burnham & Morrill is eighty years young. We like to think that it is always on the threshold of something

new to serve the public. We who have its destinies in charge can't imagine ourselves in any other line of business. For generations this has been our life; and the present Morrills, like the past, believe that "food is fun." We are conscious of the fact that we should be lost in any other enterprise. We are happy in the hope that we shall continue to find ourselves in this one.

THE END

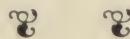


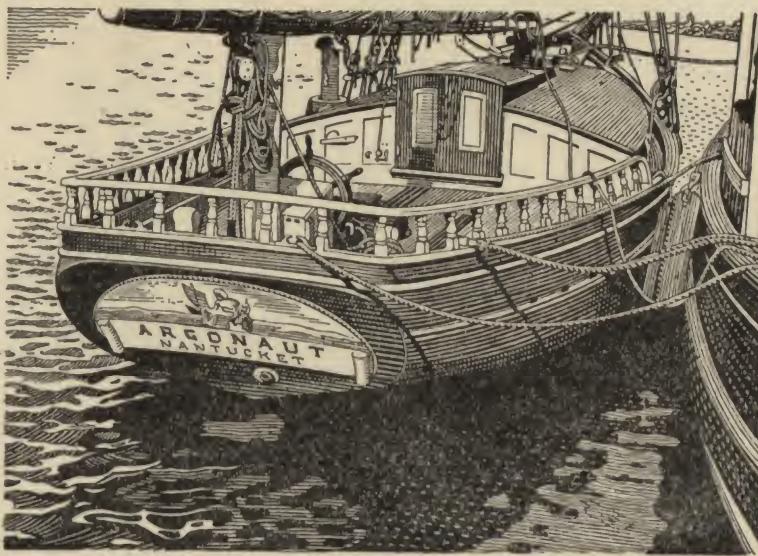
*"Actorum Memores simul
affectamus Agenda!"*





THIS NEWCOMEN ADDRESS, *dealing with the lives and work and times of two Maine men: (GEORGE BURNHAM (1831-1909) and CHARLES S. MORRILL (1836-1901), was delivered at a Maine Newcomen Luncheon of The Newcomen Society of England, held at Portland, Maine, U.S.A., on December 1, 1950. MR. MORRILL, the guest of honor, was introduced by the SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT FOR NORTH AMERICA, in this international Society whose headquarters are at London. The luncheon was presided over by DR. WILLIAM STARK NEWELL of Bath, Chairman of the Board, Bath Iron Works Corporation; Chairman of the Maine Committee, in The Newcomen Society of England.*





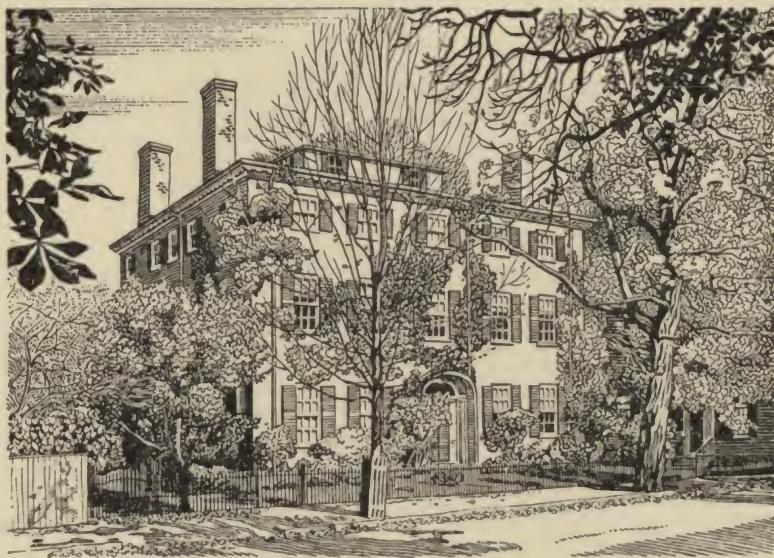
Casco Bay's deep waters and Portland's hospitable wharves, during long years, have welcomed sailing craft from all over New England; and, today, indeed they welcome ships from out the Seven Seas! Maine, fair land of pine and ocean, has a maritime tradition that well may be cherished. Such is Maine!





*Maine farms, symbols of industry, hard work, thrift,
and true diligence, have been handed down from
father to son, through long generations.*





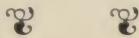
“We who have B & M destinies in charge cannot imagine ourselves in any other line of business. For generations this has been our life; and the present Morrills, like the past, believe that ‘food is fun.’ We are conscious of the fact that we should be lost in any other enterprise. We are happy in the hope that we shall continue to find ourselves in this one.”

—CHARLES S. MORRILL





*Many a Maine garden, gay with flowers and looking to
the Sea, brings life and color and cheer.
Maine is like that!*



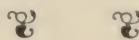


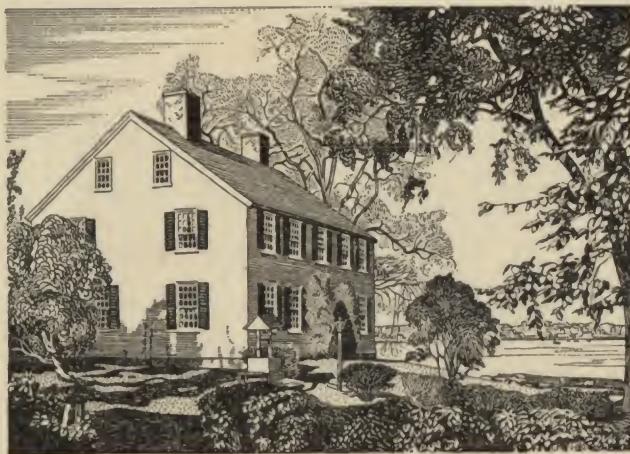
*Churches in Maine, graceful, reverent, with rare beauty
—these indeed are very symbols of the directness of
purpose and the quiet Faith of
God-fearing New Englanders.*



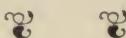


*Where woods and rocks and pine-needles meet lap of
tidal river—here resides Maine's gift
of beauty to all America!*





AMERICAN NEWCOMEN, interested always in industrial history, takes satisfaction in this colorful and delightful Newcomen manuscript dealing with the constructive lives of two Maine men whose efforts began more than a century ago, and whose work is typical of the best of sturdy Americans. These old New Englanders, trained in habits of industry, thrift, self-reliance, and resourcefulness, are fine examples of the best of American traditions. Their background, of a God-fearing Maine, gave strength and stability and contentment to their active lives. Many an American of today can learn lessons from these two men—and gain inspiration!





THE NEWCOMEN SOCIETY OF ENGLAND
IN NORTH AMERICA

BROADLY, this British Society has as its purposes: to increase an appreciation of American-British traditions and ideals in the Arts and Sciences, especially in that bond of sympathy for the cultural and spiritual forces which are common to the two countries; and, secondly, to serve as another link in the intimately friendly relations existing between Great Britain and the United States of America.

The Newcomen Society centers its work in the history of Material Civilization, the history of: Industry, Invention, Engineering, Transportation, the Utilities, Communication, Mining, Agriculture, Finance, Banking, Economics, Education, and the Law—these and correlated historical fields. In short, the background of those factors which have contributed or are contributing to the progress of Mankind.

The best of British traditions, British scholarship, and British ideals stand back of this honorary society, whose headquarters are at London. Its name perpetuates the life and work of Thomas Newcomen (1663-1729), the British pioneer, whose valuable contributions in improvements to the newly invented Steam Engine brought him lasting fame in the field of the Mechanic Arts. The Newcomen Engines, whose period of use was from 1712 to 1775, paved a way for the Industrial Revolution. Newcomen's inventive genius preceded by more than 50 years the brilliant work in Steam by the world-famous James Watt.





*“The roads you travel so briskly
lead out of dim antiquity,
and you study the past chiefly because
of its bearing on the living present
and its promise for the future.”*

—LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAMES G. HARBORD,
K.C.M.G., D.S.M., LL.D., U.S. ARMY (RET.)

(1866-1947)

*Late American Member of Council at London
The Newcomen Society of England*

